1: Parman E-4,5 (1970-1971) 1972 ES10 Highland Scots ES10
Shawbost

Chapter 7

Conclusions:
Summary and Theoretical Considerations

A. Summary

Crofting townships of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland are within a few hours' travel of the major cities of Britain. An extremely high percentage of the young people in the crofting counties attend universities and other institutions of higher education. Politically, administratively, economically and in other ways, the crofting population participates in the larger urban-industrial society of Britain.

Despite this participation, the township-qua-village-community is a relatively strongly bounded system. This thesis investigates factors contributing to the strong boundedness. From a relatively self-sufficient economic unit using agricultural practices suited to the extensive cultivation of marginal land by smallholders, the township has during recent decades changed to one dependent on goods and services provided by the larger society. Crofting activities nevertheless persist, in part because of the incentives offered by government bodies such as the Crofters Commission and the Department of Agriculture. The

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The fact that crofting townships are located on marginal land is one reason that the larger society is not motivated to exploit the land. The Crofters Holding Act of 1886 and subsequent legislation ensured protection of and incentives for continued maintenance of crofting and the crofting township.

Protective government legislation, grants and loans for housing, subsidies for rearing livestock, relatively low taxes, and the economic protection provided by a socialistic government in times of crisis have helped to maintain a core of crofting families for many generations. The predominance of older persons in the township is striking, but many of the younger people who have left the island to work on the mainland return frequently, contribute part of their salary to the remaining family members, and plan eventually to marry and settle down in the village or to retire there. Long-term residence of kin-linked families in a small area has in itself contributed to the boundedness of the township network.

The policy of the government, through developmental agencies such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board, has been to support economic strategies that complement rather than interfere with the functioning of the crofting township with its small holdings and communal practices. The Harris Tweed industry is lauded as an

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24 industry which is compatible with crofting. Because
188 weavers are self-employed, they can set their own schedule
632 of work and thus continue to participate in croft work
and fulfill various township obligations. The effects
[121] of this industry on the township as a social boundary
[434] system were investigated. The income available from
[463] weaving is unpredictable, which encourages the retention
of crofting practices and other patterns of behavior,
such as "occupational pluralism," that were found to be
[476] adaptive in the past. Such strategies also strengthen
[82] township boundaries; for example, they encourage mutual
[434] aid and communal township practices. But weaving also
[407] offers a high level of income; and some weavers, preferring
to spend most of their time weaving, have neglected
crofting, or have invested in tractors or other motorized
transport which enables them to harvest crops, cut peat
and perform other activities independent of other township
members.

105 The fundamentalist Free Church constitutes an important
621 boundary-maintaining mechanism, serving to exclude various
795 external influences of the larger society from the township.
632 However, a smaller network of persons engaged in the
184 religious sphere of social activity, a subsystem within
105 the township system, also exists which has the appearance
794 of a firmly bounded system. These are members of the clique
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105 794 621 632 184 [494] of the converted, who occasionally neglect township and neighborly duties in favor of religious activities. The increase in private transportation during the past 25 years has facilitated the maintenance of closer ties within the clique. The existence of such a strongly bounded subsystem is an example of a trend toward the weakening of the township as a social boundary system, but this trend is countered by other factors that strengthen or help preserve the township as a bounded system.

105 632 621 166 184 People come and go from the township, but this appears to maintain rather than weaken township boundaries because behavior different from that prescribed within the township can be performed outside it, and conformist behavior reassumed upon reentry. Those unable to conform with standards of behavior prescribed within the township are not likely to return.

[528] [829] Township members who have settled away from the island come back periodically for recreation and a sense of belonging. They increase the value of the township and its way of life in the eyes of the inhabitants, and provide them with subject matter for conversation until the next holiday season, when the exiles again return.

105 632 621 184 [178] The boundedness of the township is thus a qualified boundedness that, over the past 100 years and especially since the second world war, has decreased in strength but is nevertheless strong today.

105 632 621 184 is nevertheless strong today. The relatively strong boundedness derives from a number of factors. Important among these are economic adaptations to modern conditions, which consist in part of the retention in modified form of traditional economic activities in response to various constraints and incentives presented by larger British society. Also important are institutionalized bonds of affect, particularly of kinship and community, and ties of religious affiliation and identification. These ties continue to be functionally important in part because of the geographical and social marginality of the crofting township. This combination of factors has resulted in the persistence of a relatively strongly bounded system which retains distinctive features in an extensively urbanized and industrialized nation.

B. Theoretical Considerations

121 In the United States, the concept of "peasant" has provided the main conceptual tool by which rural communities which are structurally integrated with the larger nation-state may be studied (cf. Foster 1967, Wolf 1966). [632] [621] The Scottish crofting township has some of the characteristics of a closed corporate peasant community (Wolf 1957), but it is difficult to apply the word "peasant" to such a 000 community. Cultivation for subsistence is minimal, and in

3: Geddes K-4, 5 (1919-1952) 1955 ES10 Highland Scots
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121 cannot be changed, as for the future which can—lies in the intensity of its communal traditions, extinguished elsewhere. Much has gone—many of the fishing crews are [178] disbanded and team-work has weakened—but much lives on, and much has been learned. The Gaels have still to [184] make their full offering to English-speaking civilisation. To do so, they must find their own fulfilment within the framework of the Highlands of Scotland.[1]

2. *Scottish Crofts, Farms and Labour-teams: the Rural Unit Today*

184 When, in thinking of Scots countrymen, we differentiate
• 105 between the men of the Highlands and Isles, the Lowlands and the Borders, what stamp of occupation, society and economic class best characterises the three regional types? The differences we note between them are due not only to their place of birth and region, but to their occupational [433] discipline and social ways. Imagine, for example, a Gael, a Lowlander and a Borderer, all three of whom follow the same calling—say, a trio of farmers, of shepherds or farm servants, or of independent, full-time small-holders. When brought together each trio would find they shared similar interests and aims in their work, and all that follows from it. In fact, they might have more in common than three Gaelic-speaking men who differed from one another in vocation, although, as Gaels, the latter group would find a bond in culture and kinship. But a fourth type of Scot, the crofter of the North-west townships with whom this book is concerned, would stand out, distinctively, from any other, whether his home were Zetland or the Hebrides. Thus not only their home or region differentiates Scots countrymen, but their calling or class; and their families

[113] [1] A. Geddes and F. D. N. Spaven, *The Highlands and Isles* (1949).

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share their characteristics. So to gain a sense of proportion from the start, we must map the location of Scots countrymen, their numerical importance, and their types of grouping. Let us begin with the first of these three aspects, their regional location (Fig. 2).

The base map on which the data are plotted shows the boundaries dividing the hill masses of the Highlands and Southern Uplands from true 'lowland'. This hill country is mostly covered by rough pasture (left blank on the map) within which lie strips of 'Isolated Arable' with other improved land in the valleys and along the outlying coastlands (shown in black). This hill country includes the Scottish Isles, with the exception of Orkney, which falls rather into the category of 'lowland'. It is largely devoted to sheep farming and crofting, or left to grouse and deer. The lowland area from the Orkneys to the Tweed and Solway is devoted to mixed and dairy farming with lowland types of small-holding, except, of course, for 'Industrial Regions', which include most of the urban area of Scotland.

Within the 'three-mile' territorial limit from the coast lie the inshore waters, in which local fishing was once important, and might again become so; these are left white on the map (Fig. 2). By contrast to their narrow extent on the East Coast, their width is notable in the Northern Isles and on the West Coast.

The problem set in making this map is to show two different worlds, as it were: the Highland and the Lowland. The two are rarely envisaged together, and much confusion of thought and policy results. To master the map, the reader may scrutinise first one part, the Highlands (covering the other with one hand), then the other part, the Lowlands (in the same way): thus each will appear clearly in turn. Both can then be envisaged together.

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CONCLUSION

(CHAPTERS V TO VIII)

175 178 • 105 Manifestly, prevailing views of the relationships of chief and people, and above all, of the people to one another, must be revised, even reversed. So must widespread views of the relation of clerical to 'lay' members in the living, though unseen, Church. The enduring character of the people's primitive faith, from its early arrival to our time, may be almost unique in Western Christendom; distance and sheer physical poverty proved to be its protection. Had they been better preserved, the temporal and spiritual traditions of the Eastern Gael, and also of Scots Lowlanders, might well justify a revision of views. In the Isles again and again the people were placed under 'Authority' —under laird and soldier, legislator and official, priest and pastor, orthodox cleric and unorthodox 'intellectual'. Should not each of these ask with humility whether they and their predecessors have not often misled those who might have led them, mistaught those from whom they might have learned?